9. SIGHT RECORDS OF UNUSUAL BIRDS FROM COLABA POINT, BOMBAY, MAHARASHTRA

The southernmost tip of Bombay Island, Colaba Point, provides an excellent habitat for roosting gulls and terns. The remnant patch of mangroves, the open golf course and the surrounding vegetation also provide shelter and refuge for many migrants moving south in the autumn. The shape and position of the peninsula tends to funnel the migrants moving down the coast so that a concentration of birds is to be found at the tip, creating an area that has considerable potential as a ringing station or an observatory.

The observer spent several days in the area in late 1974 (26-28 October, 17-20 November). The following species are of interest because of their rare occurrences in the Bombay region. All are well known to me in parts of the world where they are of regular occurrence. A draft of this note was shown to Mr Humayun Abdulali and his remarks are included in parenthesis under each species.

Wilson's Storm Petrel **Oceanites oceanicus.** Two birds were sighted offshore in 17th November and were identified by their flight characteristics combined with the feet projecting beyond the end of the tail. Not previously recorded in the Bombay area.

[Sinclair (*JBNHS* 1: 167) said it was known but rare along the Konkan, but there was no further record in the neighbourhood until a specimen was collected out of a party of 8-10 birds at the entrance to Bombay Harbour on 22 October 1947, several single birds having been seen a few miles southwards on the same day (ibid. 47: 550).]

Crab Plover **Dromas ardeola.** An adult and an immature bird were seen feeding near the mangroves on 27th October. Unmistakable, large, long legged, black-and-white wader with a large heavy bill.

[This is now rare near Bombay and the only available records are of individuals shot/seen at Thal and Rewas, Kolaba district, on the mainland almost opposite Colaba in Bombay, both on 26 October 1930 and 1935.]

Kentish Plover **Charadrius alexandrinus.** Many birds seen on most days in mixed flocks with Mongolian (*C. mongolus*) and Large Sandplovers (*C. leschenaulti*).

[Horace Alexander noted them at Colaba on 25 February 1949 (*JBNHS* 49: 311) and we saw them again together in February 1951. They are presumably regular visitors though confused with the Large Sandplovers and overlooked.]

Arctic Skua **Stercorarius parasiticus.** Parasitic or Richardson's Skua Birds were sighted almost daily and may have involved five individuals. Observed chasing small gulls and terns.

[I was shown an unmistakable skua chasing a Lesser Crested Tern, *Sterna bengalensis*.]

Pomatorhine Skua **Stercorarius pomarinus.** Two adults seen pursuing an immature Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*.

[Our only records are from Ceylon.]

Slenderbilled Gull **Larus genei.** One seen on 26th October and two on 18th November. Not easily separable from the Blackheaded Gull. *L. ridibundus* but the longer decurved bill rules out confusion.

[Br A. Navarro, S.J. has seen and obtained specimens near Bombay in December/January (*JBNHS* 65: 218).]

Whitewinged Black Tern **Chlidonias leucopterus.** Four birds positively identified on 27th October; separated in the field from the Whiskered Tern *C. hybrida* by the daintier flight, paler rump and the 'saddle' appearance on the immatures seen.

[I have published a sight record supported by Horace Alexander on 31 March 1950 (*JBNHS* 49: 310) and others have been subsequently reported. The Bird Migration Camp at Point Calimere ring-

ed some 50 birds but no specimen has been obtained from Indian limits. Some of the terns including *S. hirundo*, are very confusing and it would be well to obtain specimens in support of the first few records.]

Common Tern **Sterna hirundo.** Over 400 birds in October with a few present in November. Dark wing tips, grey rump and longer tarsus separates this from the very similar Arctic Tern *S. paradisaea* in winter plumage, the latter not being present.

Short-toed Larks **Calandrella cinerea.** Flocks of 100 and over were seen feeding near the golf on most days.

[Flocks often seen on dry open land adjoining salt pans, mangrove, etc. October to February.]

Many more Palaearctic migrants were seen in the area in fluctuating numbers. The species involved were mostly wheatears, warblers, redstarts, bluethroats, bee-eaters and a continual stream of swallows.

This area would be excellent for migrational studies by local ornithologists and is only a few minutes by bus from the Society's rooms.

120, Madeline Road,
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Durban 4001,
South Africa,
March 25, 1976.

J. C. SINCLAIR

10. A NOTE ON CROCODILIAN SEX DETERMINATION
(*With two photographs*)

Rene Honegger has written in IUCN Bulletin 32 (1971) that the sex of living crocodiles of certain species can be determined by manual probing of the cloaca of specimens over 75 cm in length. Other methods include body size comparisons in large adults (the male grows larger) and scalation (the scales surrounding the cloaca are larger in the males of some species) but these are limited in scope and accuracy.

We have one *Alligator mississipiensis* 129 cm long and one 15 year old *Crocodylus palustris* 195 cm long. On transferring them recently we were able to check and determine their sex by the manual probing method. The Alligator proved to be a female with an unobstructed cloacal passage. The Marsh Crocodile is a male, the penis being a soft obstruction about 7 cm inside the cloaca. An unexpected bonus was that the crocodile extruded its penis about 12 cm while it was being checked resulting in the accompanying photograph.

Sex determination by external features is extremely difficult in many reptiles but very important when planning breeding and rearing programmes such as a crocodile farm. The success of the Samut Prakan Crocodile Farm in Thailand with its population of 11,000 crocodiles (*C. siamensis* and *C. porosus*) points to very good chances of successful crocodile farming in India. This will be a necessity to save India's three crocodilians and can be an economically profitable project as well.